



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

Office
Rec
5/24/54

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release MAY 21, 1954

UNSEASONABLE WEATHER IN CANADIAN PRAIRIE
PROVINCES CAUSES CONCERN ABOUT WATERFOWL PRODUCTION

Preliminary reports from Fish and Wildlife Service biologists conducting the annual waterfowl breeding-ground surveys in Canada show that this year's spring weather is unfavorable, compared to recent years, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay said today.

John L. Farley, Director of the Service, expressed concern over the effects of unseasonable weather during April and the first half of May. Portions of the southern parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, an important segment of the Continent's duck producing area, have been experiencing winter conditions with snow and below-freezing temperatures well into May. As a result, many of those ducks that usually migrate farther north, and many swans and blue and snow geese, lingered in this prairie region.

While adequate numbers of waterfowl have returned to their breeding habitat, the unseasonable weather has delayed migration and nesting and, in addition, has postponed agricultural activity in this intensively farmed area. Extensive spring plowing and burning, coincidental with first nesting attempts, will have a detrimental effect on nesting success. In addition to spring burning, some sections this year report evidence of an increase of burned-over stubble fields, ditch banks, and pot hole edges during the fall and winter months as a result of the lack of precipitation during those months.

"A survey of this number one production area completed this week," Director Farley said, "shows that the drought of last fall and winter has extended into portions of the Prairie provinces and is reflected in the drying up of pot holes and sloughs, and a drop in the water level of many of the remaining water areas. Precipitation, or lack of it, during the next few weeks will have a major effect on this year's waterfowl crop."

Lack of rainfall in key areas will seriously curtail production. Since both 1952 and 1953 were banner waterfowl producing years, a drop-off from that production may indicate a need for a proportionate reduction in the harvest.

x x x